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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Haunted House Tale Has Modern Setting

By NEIL A. MATHESON

NORMALLY ONE thinks of "haunted house" tales as belonging to the long ago, but I ran into a haunted house story last week in a Kings County village that is less than 40 miles from Charlottetown that is in the present.

A New Brunswick couple, and a group of workmen who board with them, had an interesting, and at times, a scary experience with strange noises and other things that defied natural explanation.

This is not a sensational story, not nearly so much so as one I'm going to tell later, but the lady of the house told me at times there were noises in the walls, and at times it seemed as though the walls would break down.

There were also noises upstairs where the boarders slept. Indeed it was pressure from these men, I believe, that finally led the couple to move their place of residence to a new house. They said they could not put up with the strange noises and disturbances any longer.

The strange part of the story, so far as my reaction is concerned, is that the strange noises, disturbances, etc. lasted for a two-week period in early autumn of 1966. Things quieted down then, and remained quiet until exactly a year later. Then the noises and disturbances started all over again.

### Walter O'Brien Story Really Good

I COME now to one of the most interesting haunted house stories I ever heard. Those of you who read Walter O'Brien's Bristol Notes, sometime last month read the story there. But I'm going to repeat it here, in brief form, in case you may have missed Walter's story, as I did myself.

A house that stood not very far from Walter's old home became haunted. There was shouting and there was loud, piercing screeching among other things. It was so bad that living in the house became almost completely impossible. I believe there were also flashing lights.

The residents were Roman Catholics so naturally they called their spiritual advisor Father Joe Rooney.

I am not a Roman Catholic but I recall that my friend Dr. Gus MacDonald, the beloved doctor of Eastern Kings who is now retired, told me his church has a ceremony called "exorcism" which casts out evil spirits.

I FIND IN an old English dictionary that exorcism is "the expulsion of evil spirits from persons or places by certain adjurations or ceremonies. The Greek and Roman Catholic churches have it ... it was also common among the Jews", the old dictionary says.

At any rate Father Rooney was called and the story that Walter told me is that he was able to confine the evil spirit to a single room in the basement. The door was locked and the residents were warned "never to open that door".

They left the door locked and the strange noises, the screeching and the rest, were never heard by them again.

But, Walter said in his story, and he repeated it to me, another family moved into the house. They opened the locked door and the screeching and other noises resumed. The evil spirits had been released. The new family left. The old house has been vacant since, I have been told. It's now near to the tumbling down stage, Walter tells me. I wonder if the spirits will haunt the old building, even though there is nobody there to torment by their presence. I'd say that story ranks at the top of the haunted house stories I've heard, and I've had a number in this column in previous years.

I heard some interesting stories on a visit last week to the Dundas Centre-Poplar Point area. A man who asked me not to use his name told me. Let's call him "Jack Pine", merely to have a name I can use in this story – of course that is not his real name.

Mr. Pine told me of a Dr. Morris who practiced medicine in that vicinity some years ago.

### This Ghost Was Bundle Of Shingle

THE DOCTOR came one night to a spot on the road where his horse stood still and refused to move. The horse was well mannered, normally he would do anything the doctor asked. But this time he simply refused to move.

The doctor went to the horse's head and peering into the half-light of the night, he saw something which he believed was the features of several men.

The doctor had no belief in ghost stories, or in "any other nonsense" of that kind. Yet he could see the features of the men's faces, at least he thought he could.

If he had been a superstitious man, he might have turned his horse around and left that area rapidly. But the doctor went up the road to see who the men were. When he arrived at the spot, though, he saw not three men, but several bundles of shingles that had been dumped by the side of the road. Because his horse did not know what they were, he had been afraid to walk past them.

And here's one I never heard before concerning old beliefs, or superstitions.

### Don't Walk In Middle Of Road

AS CHILDREN, Mr. Pine told me, we were warned never to walk at night in the middle of the road, lest horses run over us and trample us. I didn't get the reason at first, but Mr. Pine and his wife explained that the people of those years believed in forerunners and one of them was that the horses in a funeral procession often passed over the road, several days before a man, woman, or child in the district died.

One never knew, of course, when a neighbor might die, and consequently they did not know when the forerunner funeral might go up the road. So the children never walked in the middle of the road, not at night at any rate.

Another man believed in fairies and in the stories of what fairies were said to do. One story said fairies played sweet music when they gathered at night.

This man had gone west, had been there perhaps 10 to 15 years, and then returned. His belief in fairies persisted.

## Fairies Play Sweet Music

HIS SISTERS and some of his neighbors decided to play a trick on him one night. They took him for a walk up the road and into a field that was near a wood. Previously they had arranged with a really good violin player to be in the woods and to start playing his instrument sweetly and quietly as they got close to the wood.

Mr. Pine was a boy of perhaps 10 years at the time, and he was along with the rest of the group – the rest were considerably older.

Sure enough, the “fairies” started to play the softly sweet music as they neared the wood. The man who believed in fairies was happy, I imagine, for his belief in fairies was sustained. What happened when his sisters told him the truth is a part of the story Mr. Pine did not know.